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Running Capitalism - Corbyn Style

You would be forgiven in believing from the banner headlines of the capitalist media that Jeremy Corbyn sups with the devil. The DAILY MAIL has already marked his card as a “*Marxist*”. The DAILY TELEGRAPH has trawled through the backgrounds of all his advisers to scream out that they are an assortment of the bad, mad and dangerous to know. And the DAILY EXPRESS discovered that his great-great grandfather was in charge of a Dickensian workhouse.

The truth is less lurid. Rather than being a Marxist, Jeremy Corbyn is a card-carrying Keynesian. The principal advisor of much of Corbyn’s economic policy is the accountant, Richard Murphy who favours a “*People’s Quantitative Easing*”. And Corbyn’s shadow Chancellor, John MacDonnell announced that his economic advisors will be drawn largely from the Keynesian stable; a group which includes the US Nobel prize-winner Joe Stiglitz, Simon Wren-Lewis, Mariana Mazzucato, Danny Blanchflower and rock-star economist Thomas Piketty. Even Keynes’s biographer, Lord Skidelsky, supported Corbyn for his Keynesian credentials (GUARDIAN, 19th August 2015).

Instead of wanting to abolish capitalism, Jeremy Corbyn has looked favourably upon a series of economic reforms, such as the Tobin tax and measures to prevent corporate and individual tax evasion - hardly revolutionary. In short he favours state-led investment and government-induced inflation - no different to the policies of the pre-Blair Labour governments of Wilson and Callaghan and several post-war Tory governments which all favoured Keynesian policies.

In economic fashion, it really will be a return to the 1970s; the equivalent to wearing tank tops, wide lapels and jump suits. Under no circumstances does Jeremy Corbyn want to establish “*from each according to ability to each according to need*” a measure once advocated by his hero Keir Hardie.

What of Jeremy Corbyn’s pacifism and genuflection towards Keir Hardie? What of CND? On the centenary of Keir Hardie’s death he was praised by the BBC in a documentary as a principled pacifist. Yet in September 1914 he was urging workers to join the armed forces and he boasted that he had done more for recruiting for the war than his Liberal opponents; all this conveniently forgotten by the peace-loving Mr Corbyn (see Keir Hardie’s articles in the Merthyr Tydfil PIONEER, 22nd August and 19th December, 1914 cited in *The Kier Hardie Myth*, SOCIALIST STANDARDd no 679, March 1961).

Corbyn may say that he would never sanction the use of nuclear missiles but he, like CND, is not opposed to war if it carries the right UN approval and does not involve “*weapons of mass destruction*”. If elected Prime Minister and war became a necessity, Corbyn would have no choice but to order either air strikes, the use of the army or the navy against the “*enemy*”. Capitalism has never been very kind to moralists.

Nothing New about the “*New Politics*”

What sort of politics was to be found at this Labour Party conference? Was it the same as before with tight control over what could and could not be said, adulation of the leader and a servile membership doing as they were told? What of the “*new politics*”?

On the eve of his speech to the Labour Party Conference the shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, gave an interview with BBC Radio 5 Live. John McDonnell, unlike Jeremy Corbyn, claimed he was influenced by Marx and drew attention to Marx’s analysis of capitalism and how it works but there it ended. There was no revolutionary socialist conclusion; and for a very good reason. From McDonnell's speech we got this soundbite: “*the Entrepreneurial State*” - and an emphasis on improving productivity, which is only another way of employers increasing the workers’ rate and intensity of exploitation.

For John McDonnell the problem of capitalism is not one of profitability but “*effective demand*”. Reform not revolution is MacDonnell’s watchword. Not much in his speech to frighten the Media Barons, Lord Rothermere, Rupert Murdoch, Lord Northcliffe, The Barclay Brothers and Richard Desmond whose class will continue to live off the unearned income of rent, interest and profit if Corbyn ever makes it to Prime Minister.

Hillary Benn said that: “*Labour is now and has always been an internationalist party*”. What a lie! In both world wars the Labour Party was only too happy to help with the job of persuading or forcing workers to fight their fellow-workers in the “*national interest*”. For this betrayal, Labour politicians were rewarded with Ministerial posts in both wars; this was how they earned their reputation as an “*electable party*”, a party of government.

The Labour Party’s unifying theme is not class but the ‘*national interest*’. And this will mean that in any case where there is a conflict between workers and the ‘*national interest*’, the state will back the employers against say striking workers. Their vaunted ‘*internationalism*’ will also be defined and limited by care for the over-riding issue of the ‘*national interest*’ and the need to go to war, particularly against Isis in Syria.

As for their ‘*socialism*’, Ann Black from the Party’s National Executive Committee (NEC) spoke clearly as to the continuity with Blairism and Tony Blair's new version of ‘*Clause 4*’ when she stated that: “*There can be no contradiction in the New Politics between Socialism and Enterprise*”. And that too is a lie. You cannot square this particular circle: the interest of labour and capital are diametrically opposed to one another. Black’s proposition is a contradiction in terms. Socialism and capitalist “*enterprise*” are both mutually exclusive. You cannot have production for use existing simultaneously with production and exchange for profit. You cannot have the democratic ownership of the means of production and distribution existing simultaneously with the private ownership of raw resources, factories, transport and communication systems and distribution points. If socialism has a meaning, it means an end to the class system of exploitation, and end to the wages system.

Labour is not a Socialist Party

One of the most preposterous propositions coming out of the Labour conference was that the Labour Party was “*socialist*” again (Suzanne Moore, GUARDIAN 1st October 2015). The Labour Party has never been socialist; it has never stood for the common ownership of the means of production and distribution by all of society. The Old Clause 4’s objective was the establishment of state capitalism which the policy of nationalising the railways amounts to.

The Labour Party has taken a step back from Corbyn's radicalism of only a month ago when he was being hailed as the new Keir Hardie. The massive support he got was largely down to the unpopularity of so many spiteful Tory policies which hurt those eking out an existence on inadequate benefits and the subsequent explosion in the use of

food kitchens throughout the country. The hope of his naïve supporters was that this swing to the capitalist Left may actually mean some hope of a change for the better. Some hope!

The result will be a disappointment if the Labour Party under Corbyn gets elected as the policies they can pursue may not be so very different from those of the Tories. What if Corbyn was elected as the economy went into another economic crisis and trade depression? What happens if there is simultaneously increasing unemployment and inflation? What would become of his Keynesian economic plans then? What will the trade unions say when his government orders troops to break strikes? That happened under the much-praised 1945 Attlee government, and also under the Wilson and Callaghan governments. That is how the 1970s ended for the Labour Party; in utter failure. And it also led to a decade of Margaret Thatcher and the imposition of market fundamentalism.

So does Corbyn represent something new? As the Who sang on “*Won’t get fooled again*”

*Meet the new boss
The same as the old boss*

Quite!

INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, during what was known at the time as the Great Depression, and again in the depression between the two world wars, an increasing number of workers – and even some professional economists – were paying attention to the analysis of capitalism made by Karl Marx in his work *Capital*. Marx showed that unemployment, and its rise to peak levels in periodical phases of trade depression, arose out of the structure of capitalism itself, and is therefore inevitable while capitalism lasts.

This growing interest in Marx was all but extinguished with the publication in 1936 of J. M. Keynes’ *THE GENERAL THEORY OF EMPLOYMENT, INTEREST AND MONEY*. According to the new doctrine it only needs the government to “manage the economy in such a way as to maintain demand” for full employment to be created and trade depressions to be abolished.

Keynes described Marx’s *Capital* as “*an obsolete economic textbook, which I know to be not only scientifically erroneous but without interest or application for the modern world*” (*A SHORT VIEW ON RUSSIA*”, J. M. Keynes, 1925. P. 14). Keynesian doctrines were accepted by most economists, political parties and the trade unions. Writing in 1957 (*REMEDIES FOR INFLATION*) Mr. (now Sir Harold) Wilson stated that the Labour Party and all other “*major parties*” were Keynesian. As late as 1974, in spite of the evidence that Keynesian techniques had been a failure, the Tory M.P. Mr Peter Walker called his party “*the party of Keynes and Disraeli*”, while the Liberal M. P. Mr John Pardoe said that the Liberal party is “*the party of Keynes and William Beveridge*”.

Alone in this country the Socialist Party of Great Britain insisted from the outset that Marx was right; that the new doctrines were fallacies; that full employment cannot be maintained; that trade depressions cannot be eliminated; that the remedies proposed were only disguised inflation and would do nothing to serve the working class interests (*QUESTIONS OF THE DAY*, Socialist Party of Great Britain, 1978 p. 92- 93)

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Refugees – An Insoluble Problem

Throughout the summer of 2015 the flow of refugees from Syria and other Middle Eastern states continued steadily, rising to media reports of “*a flood of refugees*” and David Cameron stoked nationalist fears of “*swarms of migrants*”. To nationalist parties, such as the France’s Front National and the British far-right parties BNP and UKIP, not to mention gangs of thuggish racists, this was a cause close to their own hearts.

In Hungary where nationalism is strong, Premier Orban was quick to start building barbed wire fences to stop refugees crossing from Serbia, and forcing many to be stuck for days in a railway terminus, unable to reach the Austrian border, as in Hungary they were not registered. The nightmare of a trek for safety meant large numbers of people drowning in the Mediterranean or suffocated in sweltering heat in vans.

Months after this mass exodus from war-torn Syria began, and only after a wave of public sympathy for the plight of such wretched people – largely triggered by the sight of that drowned toddler washed up by the waves: only in September did politicians and priests start to change their tune.

Till then, politicians had done the opposite of Thatcher's Good Samaritan: washing their hands of the matter, walking on by, and insisting they were already doing a lot to 'help'. That was money spent to support camps in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, etc. – in the region, but not in Western countries.

As the 'migrants' trudged from one state to another, homeless and despairing, the problem was turned into a heartless game of 'pass the parcel'. Make it some one else's problem was the general response, especially from Eastern Europe's politicians.

Cameron first refused to accept any but a select few, then realising that this meant he was out of step with public opinion, did a fast U-turn and declared that "*thousands more*" would be admitted. Was this just vote-catching PR?

The numbers of refugees involved are enormous: an estimated 4 million had fled from Syria by mid-summer, out of a total population of 22 million. Turkey had taken 1.8 m, Lebanon 1.2 m, Jordan 600,000, Iraq about ¼ m, and 130,000 went to Egypt. The refugee camps in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan are overcrowded, with only basic amenities – just tents, water, and mouldy food (past its "sell-by" date), and lacking schools or medical help. Many children from the camps have been forced onto the local labour market, often working for very low pay, or in the sex-trade – i.e. prostitution - just to help feed their families or pay for medical care.

Yet Cameron plans to reduce the British government contribution to the maintenance of such camps by raiding the (£12bn) budget for international development so as to fund council support for any refugees grudgingly let into the UK.

Cameron talks of military action in Syria as his idea of stopping the refugees at source. But so many Syrian cities have been reduced to rubble, shattered and shelled by their own government, the West-sponsored 'rebels' and the extremist ISIS. To increase the terrors experienced by ordinary people is only to increase the likelihood that they would seek to escape from such a nightmare. War is not the only reason for needing to escape. There is another cause of the instability plaguing the eastern Mediterranean regions and Sub-Saharan Africa with crop failures following years of drought.

The connection between rising grain prices and political instability was clear in Egypt. A major drought in China brought crop failures, the world price of wheat doubled (2010-2011), and in Egypt bread prices tripled, increasing resentment against the Mubarak regime. In Syria, there was a long drought from 2006 to 2011, and water resources fell 50% between 2002 and 2008. With increasing desertification, people migrated to the towns from the countryside. There are civil wars and bloody instability in countries like Darfur (Sudan) and northern Nigeria affected by desertification. The future for sub-Saharan Africa is particularly dire, as various studies have shown (see ***Climate change conflicts*** LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE, September 2015).

Western warmongering in the Middle East, along with capitalism's industrialisation and consumerism, has brought insoluble problems. One result is wars and large-scale migrations as the desperate seek somewhere they can live in safety. But can capitalism ever provide anywhere 'safe'?

Now this localised refugee problem has spilt outside the region as this mostly well-educated and affluent group, just a fraction of the 4 million Syrian refugees, seek asylum in Western countries. But these states with their self-seeking politicians, bending to the nationalist rhetoric, all do the NIMBY act – not in my backyard.

As ever, capitalism provides us with lots of problems but very little by way of solutions. Always, there are

competing economic and political interests to bargain with, plus geo-politics and the usual bellicose sabre-rattling from Russia and the US. Yet in a sane, socialist society, we would have just one world, with no national divisions - a world of cooperation, not competition.

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Terrorism, Isis and Oil

What are “*British values*”? In trying to answer this trivial and meaningless question, the Prime Minister, David Cameron and the Home Secretary, Theresa May have only succeeded in drawing attention to four centuries of aggressive and often violent British foreign policy. No more so than Britain’s relationship with Iraq. The history of modern Iraq is also a history of British capitalism’s pursuit of its oil interests and the establishment of spheres of strategic importance in the region. This places Isis in its historical context rather than as an inexplicable political aberration coming out of nowhere.

It is convenient for politicians in Britain to portray the composition of Isis as made-up solely of psychotic killers; a blood-cult all wanting a quick exist to heaven and 72 virgins. Yet the Islamic fundamentalism embraced by Isis is not unique to the region nor does the group have a monopoly on violence, death, and terrorism as Claud Cockburn has shown in his recent book *THE JHADIS RETURN: ISIS AND THE NEW SUNNI UPRISING* (2015).

Cockburn shows that countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have, with impunity, long exported the fundamentalist Wahhabi theology, through a network of Gulf-funded mosques and madrassas. They have done so with little or no opposition because of Western capitalism’s need for oil and the winning of lucrative billion dollar military contracts to supply these three Islamic states with anything from fighter jets to military equipment useful in putting down internal dissent.

These three countries share similar crude and barbaric practices with Isis about which the West remains strangely mute. Little was said in protest, for example, when “*a Saudi who set up a liberal website on which clerics could be criticised was sentenced to a thousand lashes and seven years in prison* (Cockburn p, 6).

To begin to understand Isis is to place the Middle East within a concrete and materialist context rather than a fictional account taken from the imperialist racism of novels like *BEAU GESTE* in which British ruling class values of “*decency and honour*” are unquestioned, European and in particular French Imperialism a benign given and where the Arabs are portrayed as a bad lot not to be trusted and to be killed with little or no explanation.

Iraq, Britain and Oil

Britain’s interest in what became Iraq came largely out of its need to consolidate the supply of oil to the Royal Navy after the end of the First World War. Following the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, British capitalism plundered oil from Iraq both as a military and economic necessity.

In an article “*GREAT POWER CONFLICT OVER IRAQI OIL: THE WORLD WAR 1 ERA*” James A Paul, Executive Director of Global Forum, gave a snap-shot of this plunder and its reaction:

Throughout this phase (1918-1928), as in all phases of Iraq’s oil history, major international powers combined national military force, government pressure and private corporate might to win and hold concessions for Iraq’s oil. The defeated and dismembered Ottoman Empire and its defeated ally Germany lost all oil rights they might otherwise have claimed. At the same time, three victors of the war – Britain, France and the United States – shared out Iraqi oil among themselves on a basis of relative power. The dominant colonial power, Britain, came out with nearly a half share, while the two lesser powers on the regional stage – the U.S. and France – each won close to a quarter shares. The people of Iraq were not consulted, nor did they derive any benefit from these arrangements (Global Policy Forum October 2003).

The many apologists for British capitalism and its violent history of plunder and conquest cannot fall back on a fictional default position of moral smugness which dogmatically asserts that British foreign policy has been a social good in the world. Britain has never been “*a moral country*” (David Cameron 4th Sept 2015) but like all other countries doggedly pursues its interests even though it means war, death and destruction.

The Pythonesque question: “*Whatever have the British done for us?*” is met by the terse reply: “*Nothing; Britain has just looked after its own interests*”. Other capitalist countries in the world have pursued similar objectives of expansion and domination. The railways; the ports; the communication systems, the roads and the administration centres were all built and maintained for the imperial needs of British capitalism rather than those of the indigenous population.

As a consequence, a simmering resentment of populations living in mass poverty, with high levels of unemployment and social alienation has long been tapped into by a succession of would-be political leaders including the Ba’ath party and the leaders of Sunni tribes still influential in the region.

Just a cursory glance at the history books is enough to show that the foreign policy of successive British governments has just served the interest of the British capitalist class to the exclusion and often the detriment of everyone else.

In short, British capitalism came into existence dripping from every pore with blood and dirt. Britain’s imperial position of dominance from the 18th century until after the Second World War was carved out of war, pillage, and plunder. Wherever the red was forcibly painted on the globe there was reaction and nationalist struggles.

No one has yet estimated the true cost to foreign countries in terms of death and robbery caused by the rapacious greed of British capitalism and its adventurers. Some historians have tried to give a local estimate. In his book “CAPITALISM AND COLONIAL PRODUCTION” (1982), Hamza Alavi, for example, estimates that the flow of wealth from India to Britain between 1793 and 1803 was in the order of £2m a year, the equivalent of many billions today; a significant contribution of necessary “*primitive capital*” to get the industrial revolution off the ground.

Why Is Britain in the Middle East?

Why was British capitalism in the Middle East in the first place when it was busy plundering other parts of the world? It was not to enjoy the sun and the local architecture. The answer was Britain’s need to control the trade routes to India and so, by the late 19th century, it had established strategic positions with ports for its navy, linking Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Sudan, Aden and South Africa and Egypt. At the same time Britain had also established relations with local Arab rulers along the Persian Gulf.

These trade relations with local Arab rulers were to be of a singular importance with the discovery of oil in Persia in 1909. The company which found, drilled and barrelled the oil became known as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company which then became the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1935 and BP in 2000. In 2015 BP is generating profits of £1.3million an hour (DAILY MAIL 29th 11th 2015).

The post 1914-1918 war settlements guaranteed British access to oil in Iraq, Kuwait and the Arabian Peninsula while British money and military-backed diplomacy ensured British control over Iran. At the instigation of the First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, the British government became a majority (and at-first secret) shareholder of Anglo-Persian Oil during World War I.

Britain soon became a dominant power in the Persian Gulf and later Iranian politics. British and American political operations in that nation shaped the developments that led to the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the current Middle Eastern power struggle over oil with the loss of millions of lives (wired.com/science/discoveries/news/2008/05/dayintech_0526).

In his book “WEB OF DECEIT: BRITAIN'S REAL ROLE IN THE WORLD” published in 2003, Mark Curtis,

quoted a British Foreign Office planner in 1947 stating that: “oil is a vital prize for any power interested in world influence or domination” along with a remark a later British Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd that: “We must at all costs maintain control of this oil” (p. 15-16). And British foreign policy, whether the government has been Tory or Labour, has been framed by these imperatives of securing oil ever since.

Socialists do not take sides in capitalism’s squabbles and conflicts. We have, for example, as little interest in Palestinian nationalism and the establishment of a Palestinian ruling class as we do in siding with Israel’s military and political expansion in the region. International rivalry or conflict within or between nation states is of no interest to socialists or for the working class. Workers have no country as Marx stated in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO.

Unlike the capitalist left we do not pick and choose who to support in a conflict: whether to support the Kurds against the barbarism of Isis or to support the enemies of the US in the hope that they will deal a strategic blow to “Imperialism”. Socialists oppose all wars, refusing to take sides in capitalism’s quarrels. Nor do socialists fall for the propaganda justifying war as though the world is divided into “the good, the bad and the ugly”. The forces under the auspices of the US who are fighting Isis are not taking military action in the region for ethical or humanitarian reasons but for strategic and commercial reasons and over control of oil production.

If history is to give just one useful lesson that is for the working class to understand why conflict and war occurs, who benefits and why socialism is the only solution to prevent the continued human misery we see on an almost daily basis reported on the world’s media outlets.

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British Capitalism,Saudi Arabia & The Armaments Industry

According to UN estimates, 2,288 people have died as a result of Saudi Arabian airstrikes in Yemen, half of whom are civilians. Another 9,755 are reported to have been wounded. Also sixteen million Yemenis are without access to drinking water while young children are dying from preventable diseases.

The deaths and the dying children are irrelevant for the calculation of trade and profit. Cameron’s government wants future military contracts with Saudi Arabia. And it is a big prize. In 2005, the then BAE Systems Chief Executive Mike Turner said that BAE had earned around £40 billion from Al Yamamah over 20 years. The table below shows BAE’s revenues and how much of them are from the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Defence and Aviation.

BAE's revenues in recent years

Year	Total (£m)	From Saudi arms deals (£m)	% from Saudi arms deals
2007	14309	1808	12.6%
2008	16671	1531	9.2%
2009	20374	2602	12.8%

2010	20980	2870	13.7%
2011	17770	2276	12.8%
2012	16691	2302	13.8%
2013	16864	3399	20.2%
Total	123659	16788	13.6%

The Ministry of Defence Saudi Armed Forces Project (MODSAP)
[\(http://deceptioninhighplaces.com/arms-trade/summary-of-britains-biggest-arms-deals-with-saudi-arabia/\)](http://deceptioninhighplaces.com/arms-trade/summary-of-britains-biggest-arms-deals-with-saudi-arabia/)

The UK sold £38 billion worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia in the first four years of the Tory-Lib-Dem Coalition government. And the British government wants to win future contracts for the UK armaments industry even though the Isis Caliphate draws its violent iconography and religious fundamentalism from Saudi Arabia with the export of its Wahhabi obscurantism, torture, beheadings, religious police and the public whipping of dissenters.

“If we do not tender for the arms contract someone else will” is the oft heard reply given by the hard-nosed cynics at the Foreign Office to the anti-armament moralists. *“What about the jobs the arms contracts will give to workers in Britain?”*

The anti-armament groups have no answer to the logic of the Foreign Office because there is no answer within the framework of international capitalism. You cannot have capitalism without the effects of capitalism.

Armaments are an important component of international trade in capitalism. It is estimated that yearly, over 1.5 trillion dollars are spent on military expenditure in 2012 (*Wikipedia*). The combined arms sales of the top 100 largest arms producing companies amounted to an estimated \$395 billion in 2012 according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

And Saudi Arabia has been using the imports from British capitalism to good effect in Yemen’s civil war where two factions are fighting each other; one supported by Iran, the other by Saudi Arabia and the West. The reason is as usual; trade routes, the strategic port of Aden’s t and oil.

Andrew Smith of Campaign against the Arms Trade (CAAT) has recently criticised the British government for selling military hardware to Saudi Arabia. He said:

The Saudi bombing has created a humanitarian catastrophe and now we know the UK weapons have contributed to it (<http://rt.com/uk/268324-uk-arming-saudi-yemen/>)

And he concluded:

These weapons have not just given military support to the bombardment; they have also provided a strong political support and underlined the closeness between the UK and Saudi governments. With the destruction of Yemen and the intensifying crackdown on dissent in Saudi Arabia, the UK Government is sending the message that human rights and democracy are less important than arms sales

Saudi Arabia has spent an estimated £2.5 billion upgrading its fleet of 73 Tornados as part of a deal negotiated with UK-based arms manufacturers BAE Systems.

For the British government arms sales are more important than human rights and democracy. The welcome reception and red carpet treatment of Cameron's VIP guests such as president Xi (China), Modi (India) and al-Sisi (Egypt) with their appalling human rights records, underlines this point: democratic values are low on the British government's list of priorities.

If you do not like the effects of capitalism such as international rivalry, armament production and war it is no good moaning and writing pointless "*Why Oh Why?*" letters to the GUARDIAN; you have to abolish the capitalist cause and replace the profit system with socialism.

It is sheer naivety to believe that organisations like CAAT will make any difference to government policy. Like all single issue groups, CAAT believes you can have capitalism without the effects of capitalism. You can't. CAAT, like all reformist single-issue groups believe their issue and their issue alone is the most important. They tell us they we must "*do something now*" to stop the death and destruction around the world caused by capitalism's wars. Well, we are. Our immediate object is capitalism's abolition and its replacement with socialism.

The immediate need of the working class is not reform politics and the vain attempt to prevent Britain selling arms to despots, dictators and authoritarian regimes, but freedom from exploitation and the elimination of national boundaries and rivalries. Socialists want to see a world without armaments and war. However, unlike CAAT we hold that only a world-wide system of common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society will provide the framework in which war will be unnecessary.

In other words, only the establishment of world socialism; a society without national frontiers, conflict and competition between nation states will end the production of arms and the obscenity of war.

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Radicals, Revolutionaries and Reactionaries

In May and June 1988 the historian and Trotskyist journalist Peter Fryer, gave a series of lectures at Conway Hall. The lectures were subsequently published under the heading "*Aspects of British Black History*" with a haunting image of Olaudah Equiano on the front page; an 18th century "*radical*", "*extremist*", and "*conspirator*".

Equiano was not someone who would sit very easily with the "British values" advocated by David Cameron and Theresa May. He is unlikely to feature large in Black History Week or to be held up, like May Seacole, as an appropriate historical example for schoolchildren to look up to.

Olaudah Equiano was a former slave and a friend of the shoe maker, Thomas Hardy the first secretary of the London Corresponding Society (LCS) which had been formed in early 1792. The society was largely made up of self-taught artisans and tradesmen who met at various public houses across London in order to agitate for universal male suffrage and yearly parliaments.

Equiano was also a member of the London Corresponding Society; an organisation which opposed the revolutionary wars with France and as a consequence was considered by the State as a "*sedition*" group who needed to be suppressed. The LCS was infiltrated by government spies and *agent provocateurs*, leading to several members being tried for treason.

And treason, then, was still a capital offence punishable by being hung, drawn and quartered - a fate in 1820 that befell the Cato Street Conspirators who were caught in 1820 trying to assassinate the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool and his entire cabinet. They had taken this action as a result of the Peterloo massacre and the passing of the Six Acts which labelled any meeting for radical reform as "*an 'overt act' of treasonable conspiracy*".

As a reprisal for losing the "*treason gambit*" against the London Corresponding Society, the British state decided to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act in 1794 and later passed the Seditious Meeting Act in 1795, making the LCS illegal

and forcing it to close down. The “*crime*” of the society’s members, besides supporting the French Revolution and opposing the wars with revolutionary France, was to struggle politically to extend democracy and the vote to the working class.

And at about the same time the anti-Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 were passed preventing workers forming into trade unions; - acts supported by William Wilberforce whose opposition to chattel slavery did not extend to wage slavery.

Yes, early trade unionists were considered “*extremists*” warranting imprisonment and deportation. Workers still combined and the agricultural workers at Tolpuddle were imprisoned and sent to Australia as criminals. “*Extremists*” one and all!

In its way the London Corresponding Society was a precursor to the Fraternal Democrats, The Working Men’s Association and the Chartists of the 1830s and 1840s. It is unlikely that these three organisations would have passed the Cameron-May test of holding “*British values*”. In their day they held the dangerous and radical political programmes of wanting the introduction of universal male suffrage and in the case of the Working Men’s Association, a conscious rejection of political leadership. This is what a print compositor; Robert Hartwell, had to say on political leadership:

... for working men, were always looking up to leadership of one description or another; were being stayed to and from opinion and action by the idol of their choice, and were rent and divided when some popular breath had blown that idol from its pedestal. In fact the masses, in their political organizations were taught to look up to “great men” (or to men professing greatness) rather than to great principles (see Artisans & Politics, I Prothero, The Working Men’s Association, ch. 16, p. 315, 1979)

Nor would Marx have escaped the “*extremist*” net cast by Cameron and May whose catch not only includes political Islamists but also Animal Rights activists and anyone else who opposes by deed or by thought the “values” of British capitalism. Today, rather than being granted asylum status, Marx would have been either sent straight back to France or forced to languish in one of the many migrant detention centres patrolled by G4S and other privatised security groups. No pass to the British Library for a latter-day Marx; it would be straight to Jail and deportation.

The Genesis of Industrial Capitalism

Despite his politics (unfortunately he was a Trotskyist) Fryer’s lectures had the merit of following Marx’s original studies in tracing out the origins of capitalism from the 16th century in “THE GENESIS OF THE INDUSTRIAL CAPITALIST” (chapter 31 of CAPITAL VOLUME 1). Fryer also recalled a passage from the long forgotten book by J.L and Barbara Hammond, “THE RISE OF MODERN INDUSTRY” (1925) in which they wrote:

An age that thought of the African negro, not as a person with a human life, but as so much labour power to be used in the service of a master or a system, came naturally to think of the poor at home in the same way...

The children of the poor were regarded as workers long before the Industrial Revolution. Locke suggested that they should begin work at three...In the workhouses of large towns there was a quantity of child labour available for employment, that was even more powerless...in the hands of a master than the stolen negro...The new industry which was to give the English people such immense power in the world borrowed at its origin from the methods of the American settlements.

When a London parish gave relief it generally claimed the right of disposing of all the children of the person receiving relief, and thus these London workhouses could be made to serve the purpose of the Lancashire cotton mills as the Guiana coast served that of the West India plantations. The analogy became painfully complete. In the Asiento the Negroes are described as “pieces”, and the description would not be less suitable to the children taken for the mills.

In his lecture, Fryer homed-in on the most important of British Values: “*Trade and Profit*”. And he took this “*British*

value” and applied it to the slave trade of whom Olaudah Equiano was but one casualty among the 2.5 million other Africans sold into slavery. Between 1630 and 1807 the slave trade was a multimillion pound trading operation that is thought to have been worth some £12 million to slave merchants (p.14).

Peter Fryer finally looked at the link between slavery and investments from slavery and the development of British industry and the industrial revolution. Of British Industry and the profits from the slave trade he wrote:

Lastly, and above all, some of the profits (of the slave trade) were invested directly in British Industry. The coal and iron industries of south Wales depended directly on the triangular trade for their initial funding. In 1765 Anthony Bacon MP was granted a contract to furnish “seasoned, able and working negroes” to the islands of Grenada, Grenadines, Tobago, St Vincent and Dominica, and the British government paid him almost £67,000 for these slaves. The money went straight into industrial development around Merthyr, then a mere hamlet, Bacon took a 99-year lease on 4,000 acres of virgin mineral land, developed coal mines and iron foundries that came to be known as “Bacon’s mineral kingdom”, and made his fortune in the process. The north Wales slate industry, producing roofing slates for factory workers’ dwelling, was financed by profits from the triangular trade. The south Yorkshire iron industry; the Liverpool and Manchester railways; the Great western Railway; the original steam engine of James Watt: all were financed in part with profits accumulated from the triangular trade. The early history of the British banking system, from the first country banks and Barclay’s right up to the Bank of England, is closely connected with the triangular trade [commodities to Africa, purchase of slaves selling slaves to sugar plantation owners] , as is the early history of British insurance.

Fryer concluded his lecture with a quotation from an unnamed Royal African Company’s surgeon, who wrote in 1725 that the slave trade was:

...a glorious Trade...the Hinge on which all the Trade of the Globe moves...for...put a Stop to the Slave trade, and all the others cease of Course...who sweetens the Ladies Tea, and all generous Bowl [i.e. rum punch]; and who reap[s] the Profit of all? Therefore, let every true Briton unanimously join to concert Measures, how to center this advantageous Trade in England (p. 16).

A couple of centuries later the surgeon could have been talking about oil rather than sugar!

What of the slave trade: did the slave owners lose out when the slave trade was abolished in 1808? Not at all! As the INDEPENDENT recently reported:

The British government paid out £20m to compensate some 3,000 families that owned slaves for the loss of their "property" when slave-ownership was abolished in Britain's colonies in 1833. This figure represented a staggering 40 per cent of the Treasury's annual spending budget and, in today's terms, calculated as wage values, equates to around £16.5bn... only children under six would be immediately free; the rest being regarded as "apprentices" who would, in exchange for free board and lodging, have to work for their "owners" 40 and a half hours for nothing until 1840 (15 July 2015).

Some of this £16.5 billion helped kick-start the industrial revolution. Trade and profit: that is the only core value that British capitalism has ever cared about. And it still does. In the INDEPENDENT (3 October 2015), a Foreign Office Official, discussing the torture, beheadings and state violence towards dissent in Saudi Arabia, said that trade and profit were more important than human rights.

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The Paris Commune: A Revolutionary Model For The 21st Century?

Counterfire, a Trotskyist group who split away from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) a few years back, has just

published a book “MARX FOR TODAY”. In the chapter “*Marx and Revolution*”, the author, Katherine Connelly, uncritically holds up the Paris Commune of 1871 as a positive revolutionary model for workers to follow. This is a politically dangerous and reactionary position to take.

Connelly follows the dead-end politics of Lenin and his pamphlet *The State and Revolution* (1918) with its distortion and misrepresentation of Marx’s views of the state and universal suffrage. Of course, this is not new. The late SWP theoretician, Duncan Hallas tried to row two boats simultaneously on the question of the vote and direct action:

We are, in principle, in favour of electoral activity but only as a subordinate form of activity, only as an auxiliary to direct working class action, never as an end in itself” (*Marx and the vote*, SOCIALIST REVIEW, no 55, June 1983, pp21-2).

The Paris Commune arose out of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The republican government, who replaced Napoleon III, tried to disarm the workers in Paris who had been defending the City from the Prussian army. The republican government failed in this aim and fled to Bordeaux to set up a provisional government there, while workers in Paris declared a Paris Commune.

The Paris Commune lasted 72 days before being crushed by the republican government with the aid of the Prussian army. The class war clearly took priority even in wartime. After Paris recently experienced a horrific attack by terrorists, politicians waxed lyrical about the casualties. But who now remembers how the streets of Paris ran with the blood of the slaughtered thousands of Communards and others, massacred ruthlessly, with many buried alive? That too was an atrocity.

In its short existence it carried out a number of reform measures which included:

the separation of Church and state, public servants to be paid workers’ wages, the abolition of the death penalty, the introduction of free, and compulsory education for girls as well as boys, with equal pay for male and female teachers” (MARX AND REVOLUTION, loc cit p.60).

However, whatever the Commune thought itself to be, it was not socialist. With a largely non-socialist composition of workers on and behind the barricades, and confronting a far more powerful military force it was never in the position to establish socialism.

A useful contemporary account of the Paris Commune is given by Lissagaray in his HISTORY OF THE PARIS COMMUNE OF 1871, published in 1876 with a subsequent English translation from French by Eleanor Marx some ten years later in 1886.

Marx and the Commune

The International issued three Manifestos on the Franco-Prussian War, all of which were composed by Marx. The third Manifesto, *The Civil War in France* (1871), was written during the life-time of the Commune and praised the Commune’s achievements. Marx wrote that:

Working men’s Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators’ history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them (quoted from The Communist Manifesto and the Last Hundred Years, The Socialist Party of Great Britain, p, 18)

Connelly rightly points out that the working class has to emancipate itself but then misleadingly goes on to say that this could only be achieved “*through a revolution that smashed the existing state*” citing Marx’s comment: “*the working class cannot simply lay hold of the readymade State machinery, and weld it for its own purpose*”.

Marx’s views on how the working class was going to achieve political power and establish socialism changed over

time. When Marx was growing up the model of revolution had been provided by the capitalist class; the French Revolution of 1779 and the lesser French revolutions of 1830 and 1848 with their barricades and an armed citizen army fighting soldiers on the streets; the stuff of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. During the Elberfeld uprising of May 1849, a last attempt to defend the revolution in the Rhineland, Marx's friend and colleague, Frederick Engels supported the movement as a barricade inspector.

Universal suffrage did not exist in most of Western Europe at the time of the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO's publication in 1848. In Britain only the propertied male ruling class enjoyed the vote. Yet the Chartists were already agitating for universal suffrage, a political movement of which Marx was well aware and which he encouraged by writing for various Chartist publications. Marx's political views on the means to secure a socialist revolution changed over time as political circumstances changed.

The Socialist Model of Revolutionary Change

In 1872, Marx gave a speech at The Hague, where the Congress of the First International was being held. He said:

We know that heed must be paid to the institutions, customs and traditions of the various countries, and we do not deny that there are countries, such as America and England and if I was familiar with its institutions, I might include Holland, where the workers may attain their goal by peaceful means. That being the case, we must recognise that in most continental countries the lever of revolution will have to be force; a resort to force will be necessary one day in order to set up the rule of labour.

Marx's view on the Commune certainly developed further by 1880 when he was asked to draft the programme of the French *Parti Ouvrier*. The programme had as one of its statements:

That such an organization must be pursued by all the means the proletariat has at its disposal including universal suffrage which will thus be transformed from the instrument of deception that it has been until now into an instrument of emancipation (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/05/parti-ouvrier.htm>)

And we should also pay attention, unlike Lenin, the SWP and Counterfire, to a comment made by Engels in his 1895 INTRODUCTION TO MARX'S CLASS STRUGGLES IN FRANCE. Engels, in his Introduction, explained at great length why he and Marx no longer considered barricades and armed revolts as the best means to secure a socialist revolution, favouring instead universal suffrage.

Engels also had this to say:

The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses, is past. Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organization, the masses themselves must also be in it, must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for [with body and soul]. The history of the last fifty years has taught us that. But in order that the masses may understand what is to be done, long, persistent work is required, and it is just this work which we are now pursuing, and with a success which drives the enemy to despair (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/intro.htm>)

Ms Connelly's declaration of "...a revolution that smashed the existing state" carries with it a Leninist twist and distortion of what Marx actually meant. Marx did not put forward the theory that the bourgeois state would be totally destroyed before workers took power. And Engels agreed with Marx, for in a letter to Eduard Bernstein he wrote:

It is simply a question of showing that the victorious proletariat must first refashion the old bureaucratic, administratively centralised state power before it can use it for its own purposes (LETTER TO BERNSTEIN, 1 Jan. 1884)

Engels's letter is reflected in the 8th clause of the SPGB's OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:

...the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national

and local, in order that this machinery, ..., may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic

. While the Socialist Party of Great Britain built positively upon the theories of Marx and Engels, particularly the relationship between the working class revolution and the state, Counterfire joins with Lenin and the SWP to distort and subvert what Marx and Engels actually wrote.

Counterfire asks workers to seriously consider an out-dated revolutionary model of the 1870s; one of barricades, street fighting and workers facing the armed force of the state. Such a model can only be suicidal, the inevitable result being that workers would be crushed by force. Significantly the idea of direct action to ‘smash the state’ was a central issue on which Marx disagreed with Bakunin.

After the 1917 Bolshevik coup, some in the SPGB thought this was possibly “*the implications of a Commune not massacred but triumphant (The Monument: The Story of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, R. Barltrop 1975p.68)*. But as more information became available, it was clear that the Bolshevik’ coup could not be likened to the thoroughly democratic Paris Commune.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain, unlike Leninist vanguard organisations like Counterfire, argues that before a socialist revolution can take place and before the machinery of government can be captured, there first has to exist a socialist majority. With no socialist majority you cannot establish socialism. And to form this socialist majority is the “*long, persistent work*” referred to by Engels in his letter to Bernstein.

And long, hard and repetitive work is precisely the political activity socialists have committed themselves to today despite the cold and icy conservatism we are currently passing through. However, winter does eventually give way to spring. Socialism is well within the grasp of any worker free from prejudice and wanting to think for themselves.

There is nothing of interest within capitalism for the working class; the profit system can never be run in the interest of the workers and is the material ground for creating socialists and socialist ideas.

Only political ignorance prevents workers from forming a socialist majority which is not helped by books advising them to adopt failed political models from the past.

GRADUALISM AND REVOLUTION

To many, the word “revolution” conjures up visions of barricades and public executions. All it means is a complete change, without any implication as to how that change is to come about. The Socialist Party of Great Britain stands for a revolution in the basis of society, a complete change from class to common ownership of the means of production and distribution: this social revolution to be carried out democratically by the use of political power. It is possible for a majority of socialist workers to win power through democratic institutions, by use of the ballot and Parliament, for the purpose of carrying out the socialist revolution. Thus we stand for democratic revolutionary action.

Questions of the Day, Socialist Party of Great Britain, 1978 p. 25)

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Are Socialists Extremists?.

Are Socialists Extremists?

The Socialist Party of Great Britain has always stated that both the political means and the socialist objective have to be democratic. In other words, the political means and the political object are inseparable.

The SPGB is a democratically constituted political organisation; we believe that there should be the widest

discussion and debate of competing political ideas even those which are mad, bad and dangerous to know. Not though that universities are bastions of free speech. Universities and student unions have aggressive policies of banning newspapers, books and lecturers from the campus. If socialists wanted to debate the BNP at a university, or even UKIP, it just would not happen.

We reject censorship as self-defeating. We argue that workers should not be treated like infants with unpalatable ideas and beliefs hidden from them. Workers should make up their own minds when confronted with political ideas and act according to their own class interest. Censorship occurs when those doing the censorship are unsure of their own political case. We are not unsure of our socialist position which we have defended for over one hundred years. We stand in line for no one.

So what harm could a government do when pursuing socialists as “*extremists*”? Here are a number of options open to the capitalist State:

- * Imprison members
- * Attempt to pull the web site
- * Stop publication of socialist literature
- * Prevent socialists standing at elections
- * Prevent socialists from holding meetings at schools, universities, in public buildings and open spaces
- * Stop socialists from going on the TV, radio and being interviewed in newspapers
- * Block socialist use of social media and the internet

Quite frankly a government would have a hard time trying to prevent socialist activity taking place. You cannot kill a revolutionary idea generated by the class struggle and material interests. In any case, for the capitalist State to use its legislation against socialists in this way would be counterproductive and harm their own false legitimacy, their claim to be democratic.

And the technological advances in communication through social media and the internet has moved individuals away from total government control particularly from the coercive departments of the state; notably the police and the secret service. Yes, of course they desperately want this control back and are using acts of terrorism as a means to increase their power and influence of the security services and secret police. However, the genie is out of the bottle. Perhaps it always has been the case that the agents of the State are not as powerful as they think they are, despite the worries of conspiracy theorists of an Orwellian, dystopian future with all-pervasive electronic government control. After all, none of the security agencies in the West, despite the billions of pounds at their disposal, predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union and its Empire in 1989!

Take three examples which support the socialist argument against the view that the State has absolute power to somehow prevent the dissemination of socialist ideas and the political action of socialists. First, there is Bismarck’s anti-socialist legislation, second, the passing of the 1918 Representation of the People’s Act and third the decline and fall of the East German secret police; the Stasi.

Bismarck’s anti-socialist law outlawed all Social-Democratic organisations (the name German socialists used at the time), all working class organisations; all working class or socialist presses, and ordered the confiscation of all socialist literature by the state. Social-Democrats and various other pro-working class groups were arrested and deported. 900 workers were expelled from their homes; 1500 sentenced to various terms of imprisonment; 1300 publications were suspended and 332 worker organisations were forcibly dissolved. Nevertheless, the social democrats were still able to continue their political activity by adapting to circumstances and bypassing the State coercion used against them.

Under the 1918 Representation of the People Act, thousands of conscientious objectors, including SPGB members, were disenfranchised for five years. However the Socialist Party of Great Britain still remained active and still produced the SOCIALIST STANDARD, as we did throughout the war. Socialists who had been conscientious objectors during the war still played an active political role in the political class struggle. The reason why the Party suspended all outdoor meetings in World War 1 was not only the near impossibility of escaping prosecution under the legal offence of “*spreading alarm and despondency*” but also the actions of the Courts in backing up illegal

prosecutions. When mobs broke up legal meetings (often incited by newspapers) the police would ignore the action of the mob and charge the speakers with ‘*breach of the peace*’ and the courts upheld the accounts given by the police.

Then there is the example of the East German secret police, the Stasi. Between 1950 and 1989, the Stasi employed a total of 274,000 people. In 1989, the Stasi employed 91,015 people full time along with 173,081 unofficial informants, and yet it was still unable to prevent the collapse of the government, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the integration of East German capitalism with West German capitalism. It should be noted that the trade unions, because of their backing, by a larger number of workers were in a somewhat different position.

While the socialist movement has little support among the workers there is little to do but accept or seek to evade restrictions imposed by the authorities. As the numbers increase the situation will be correspondingly altered, either because (like the trade unions) socialists will be better able to resist, or at some stage socialist delegates will be elected by socialists to Parliament. Socialist propaganda should always stress that socialism and democracy are inseparable; that there is no way to Socialism except through the democratic action of a socialist majority and the capture of the machinery of government.

So are socialists extremists? If it means rejecting the bogus claim that capitalism is “*democratic*”, then, yes. And if it means to argue the State has little or no interest in “*individual liberty*” and instead pursues the interest of the capitalist class against the working class majority, then yes. And, if by extremist it means to take political action to help create the socialist majority necessary to replace capitalism with socialism; then we are guilty as charged.

First, though, look at those making the accusation of “*extremism*” against us! Look at the self-satisfied faces of the world leaders and their representatives who attended a “*solidarity*” march in January 2015 following the terrorist attacks in Paris. And just consider their violent and destructive policy in the Middle East and elsewhere on behalf of the interest of their respective capitalist class. Who are then the extremists?

KEIR HARDIE’S SUPPORT FOR WAR

Keir Hardie has been portrayed by Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters as an anti-war pacifist; a man of peace. This was not the case as the following extract from an article “*The Kier Hardie Myth*” from The SOCIALIST STANDARD of April 1961 (no 680) showed:

In articles directed at his electorate in Merthyr, Keir Hardie made his position clear. "*A nation at war must be united especially when its existence is at stake. In such filibustering expeditions as our own Boer War or the recent Italian war over Tripoli, where no national danger of any kind was involved there were many occasions for diversity of opinion and this was given voice to by the Socialist Party of Italy and the Stop the War Party in this country. Now the situation is different. With the boom of the enemy's guns within earshot, the lads who have gone forth by sea and land to fight their country's battles must not be disheartened by any discordant note at home.*" (PIONEER, Merthyr 15th Aug.1914). The man who recoiled from the talk of waging the Class War was quite prepared to have workers serve "*their Motherland*" in an Imperialist War; he wrote that "*We must see the war through, but we must also make ourselves so familiar with the facts as to be able to intervene at the earliest possible moment in the interests of peace*" (PIONEER 15th Aug., 1914). Let no one be deceived by the mention of the "*earliest possible moment*" because for Hardie this was a very long way off and he was in fact prepared to support a long, drawn-out conflict in Europe. As he put it on 28th November, 1914, "*May I once again revert for the moment to the I.L.P. pamphlets? None of them clamour for immediately stopping the war. That would be foolish in the extreme, until at least the Germans have been driven back across their own frontier, a consummation which, I fear, carries us forward through a long and dismal vista*" (PIONEER, Merthyr).

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Are you a Marxist?

Are you a Marxist?

Anyone brave enough to criticise capitalism and the profit system runs the risk of being labelled a “*Marxist*”. Apparently, being described a Marxist is supposed to stop dead in its tracks any further discussion of class exploitation and the class struggle.

Just to be named and shamed as a “*Marxist*” is to be written off as not being worth listening to. Political insults such as “*tub-thumper*”, “*Bolshie*”, “*fire-brand*”, “*extremist*” and “*far-left*” come to mind as loud and shrill epithets to prevent debate and discussion.

And if someone relatively poor calls into question the wealth and privilege of the rich they’re accused of pursuing a “*politics of envy*”, as though the vulgar and decadent life-style of the capitalist class paraded in the magazines of the quality Sunday press is something to be admired and held-up source of aspiration.

And what of a relatively well-off worker who dares to point out that the richest 1 per cent of the population does not create social wealth at all but instead lives off unearned income of rent, interest and profit? They are derided as “*champagne socialist*”, as though having a bob or two in your pocket takes away any right to criticise the profit system.

Engels, for example, is regarded by some as a “*champagne socialist*” – that smear appeared on the dust cover of the book “THE FROCK COATED COMMUNIST” by the Labour politician and historian, Tristram Hunt. It appears that Engels’s wealth discounted him from having anything useful to say about the conditions of the working class. He exploited workers, didn’t he? This is plainly an idiotic point of view. Being rich does not debar you from becoming a socialist. After all, Engels helped finance Marx’s writing of CAPITAL so he richly deserves a glass or two of champagne raised in his memory.

Both examples are illustrations of the fallacy of attacking the person rather than the arguments against capitalism. However, this fallacious and lazy anti-socialist propaganda cuts no ice with our opponents. Our opponents are not interested in what socialists have to say about capitalism but only in preventing socialist ideas from being disseminated to workers by using any means at their disposal.

And the crude weapons our opponents have at their disposal are abuse, character assassination, deceit, lies, and any other trick in the Machiavellian book of capitalist politics. Anything goes so long as it deflects attention away from the fact that the social problems facing the working class today are caused by capitalism.

The social problems facing workers derive from commodity production and exchange for profit not from the actions of other workers whether they are migrants, the elderly, the disabled, those persisting on “*benefits*” or living miserable lives of social alienation on “*sink estates*”. Being on the receiving end of most capitalist propaganda is like having a bucket of excrement thrown over you. An unpleasant consequence of “*the furies of self-interest*” as Marx once remarked. And there lies the present difference between socialist and capitalist propaganda. Socialists are like someone standing on Brighton Pier in a winter’s storm spitting out at sea and not only having the spit blown back into their face but also becoming increasingly drenched by being hit by one tempestuous wave after the other.

And just look at the “*quality*” of the capitalist propaganda arraigned against socialists. In the “*anti-Marxist hysteria*” of the early 21st century, even President Obama has been labelled as a Marxist by the mad hatters in the Tea Party. So too has the Pope for criticising the profit motive. The BBC, the Church of England and the tame reformists stuck in their treacle quagmire at the GUARDIAN are all written off as “*Marxists*” by the *Richard Littlejohns* of the world who scrawl out their anti-socialist bile while propped up against the bar at the “*Old Reactionary Boor*” public house in Essex. There are so many “*Marxists*” coming out of every nook and cranny you would be forgiven into believing a socialist revolution was just around the corner.

Then there is the DAILY MAIL. Day after day the newspaper claimed Ed Miliband; the former leader of the Labour Party was a closet Marxist because his father had written books on Marx while a professor at the LSE. By family connection “*red ED*”, as the disreputable rag liked to call him, was a dangerous revolutionary “*Marxist*”; a threat to house prices and the British way of life. After reading the Daily Mail it is advisable to have a long hot shower

afterwards, with plenty of soap, to get all the dirt off the body and to remove all the poisonous hate that has seeped into the pores of the skin.

So Miliband was portrayed by the Tory media as a “*Marxist-lite*” politician. That is, until he failed to gain power at the recent General Election and was forced to resign from the leadership of the party. Now he is politically dead; “*dead-Ed*” rather than “*red-Ed*”. His tomb-stone, the work of some unknown and now out-of-work PR consultant, is hidden unloved and forgotten in a garage somewhere in the depths of the Sussex countryside and so too is any reference Ed Miliband in the media as a “*Marxist*”. The smear worked. Job done.

Now it is on to Jeremy Corbyn. “*Labour leadership front runner Jeremy Corbyn today dodged questions about whether he is a Marxist...*” screamed out the DAILY MAIL during the Labour Party election contest (*So is Corbyn a Marxist?* DAILY MAIL 27th July 2015). Corbyn is as much a “*Marxist*” as the Pope is.

What of the capitalist Left? Counterfire, for example, claims to be Marxist and publishes books like “Marx for Today” but conveniently leaves out how a revolutionary working class are to establish Socialism, except by vague references to the Paris Commune of 1871(pp 59-60). Then there are the SWP, the Socialist Party, and the dozens of other political organisations advocating to nationalisation programmes, radical reformism, direct action and the imposition of their own leadership in place of “bourgeois politicians”.

Workers should avoid these disreputable and opportunist organisations at all cost. They misleadingly claim Marx led to Lenin who then led to Trotsky whose revolutionary crown then passed on to whoever currently leads their organisation. That is, before the next internecine dispute over tactics and strategy leading to a new round of expulsions and splits.

It is said of the capitalist left, that there are usually two party members with doctorates; one the leader and his supporters trying to hold onto power and the other with his own supporters wanting to take power away all for himself. The winner takes all; the loser sets up another Party. And the process starts all over again. To the point that it is now difficult to work out how many Trotskyist groups actually exist. There are just so many of them; a pile of splinters from a diseased tree.

So what we can say about all these “*Marxists*” and the “*Marxism*” they claim to follow? Well we could say that, following a comment made by Marx of those claiming to be Marxists in his own day; if this is “*Marxism*” then “*I am not a Marxist*”.

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Strike Action and the Trade Unions

The government is pressing ahead with legislation to make it more difficult for trade unions to strike. The scale of the reforms goes far wider than previously thought at the general election when it was thought that the Tory plan was for strikes to be made unlawful unless 50% of those being asked to strike voted in the ballot.

According to the Guardian:

In a set of proposals on a par with those introduced by Norman Tebbit in 1985, Sajid Javid, the business secretary, is also to require that at least 40% of those asked to vote support the strike in most key public services. In the case of 100 teachers asked to strike, the action would only be lawful if at least 50 teachers voted and 40 of them backed the strike. The double threshold would have to be met in any strike called in health, education, fire, transport, border security and energy sectors – including the Border Force and nuclear decommissioning (15th July 2015).

The proposed legislation would:

* Require all unions, not just those affiliated to the Labour Party, to ask members whether they wish to pay the

political levy and then repeat the question every five years.

- * Propose that unlawful picketing should become a criminal as opposed to civil offence and new protections should be available for those workers unwilling to strike.
- * Compel unions to renew any strike mandate with a fresh ballot within four months of the first ballot and give employers the right to hire strike-breaking agency staff as well as require a union to give the employer at least a fortnight's notice before the industrial action starts.
- * Empower the government to set a limit on the proportion of working time any public sector worker can spend on trade union duties.
- * Give the government certification officer powers to fine trade unions as much as £20,000 for breaches of reporting rules including an annual audit on its protests and pickets.
- * Require a clear description of the trade dispute and the planned industrial action on the ballot papers so that all union members are clear what they are voting for.

The trade unions believe that the trade union legislation would make strike action almost impossible while the capitalist left see this legislation as an attempt to block their tactic of strikes developing into political general strikes leading to establishment of worker's councils and "*revolution*".

How much do strikes achieve?

The number of working days lost due to strikes was 704,000 in the 12 months to April 2015, but this is a far cry from the near 13m days lost through strike action on average in the 1970s, the heyday of union strike action. This has worried the capitalist left who look to strikes as a barometer of the intensity of the class struggle.

When Marx wrote about the class struggle and strikes more than a century ago he did not share the view held by the capitalist left. In fact, in his *VALUE, PRICE AND PROFIT*, for example (Sections IV and XIV) and in *WAGE-LABOUR AND CAPITAL* (p.35 in the Whitehead edition) he took a somewhat pessimistic line based on his understanding of how capitalism works.

While urging resistance to the efforts of employers to depress wages Marx argued that it was largely a defensive struggle, with only occasional opportunities for the workers to secure "*temporary improvement*". His view was that the times when the workers can hope to gain an improvements were when the capitalists were doing well, expanding production and accumulating capital. In the reverse phase of the "*trade cycle*", with sales and profits falling and unemployment rising, he thought the workers could do little. He wrote:

The relations between the supply and demand of labour-power undergo perpetual change, and with them the market price of labour-power. If the supply overshoots the demand wages sink, although it might in such circumstances be necessary to test the real state of demand and supply by a strike, for example, or any other method.

What has been gained?

It will be noticed that Marx talked of "*testing*" the situation when trade is bad. The capitalist left reject this. They think that if enough workers strike they can make big gains in spite of adverse conditions. As regards past experience the evidence is all against this view. Apart from 1921 and 1926, the record number of days lost through strikes in any year was in 1893, when the total was over 30 million. This included Lancashire cotton workers who were out for five months, and 400,000 miners. Both strikes failed and wages generally did not rise.

Another outstanding example was the 1921-1930 decade. Unemployment was high, trade was bad and prices were falling – in all by 30 per cent. In those years which included the General Strike of 1926, the number of days lost by strikes and lockouts averaged 31 million a year, but the strikes completely failed to prevent wages also falling by about 30 per cent.

Discontent and resistance

The question arises to what extent recent experience differs from the past.

Various changes have taken place, with substantial anti-trade union legislation since 1979. Although now there are many more trade unionists than in the 19th century still only a minority of the workers join trade unions.

Around 6.4 million employees in the UK were trade union members in 2014. The level of overall union members was broadly unchanged from 2013, with a reduction of only 40,000 over the year (*Trade Union Membership*, Department for Innovation and skills, 2014). Current membership levels are well below the peak of over 13 million in 1979.

Trade union membership has tilted towards the public not the private sector of the economy leading the trade unions to adopt a policy against privatisation. The actual number of trade unions has continued to decline, along with the decline of workplace organisation, the increasing hostility of a number of major firms to recognising trade unions (e.g. Walmart), along with the increase in self-employment and the casualization of the workforce with zero-hours contracts, agency work and temping.

Most of the recent strikes have been in the public sector - teachers, local government and civil servants. These are not only a reflection of workers' discontent but also a reflection of stronger and better-organised resistance by employers.

In recent years, with a deep trade depression causing a high level of unemployment (over two million at its highest point), employers have taken a tougher line because they stand to lose when they have full order books and are hard pressed to meet delivery dates. Also, the policy of successive Tory and Labour governments is to privatise the state sector, introducing new contracts and changing conditions of work and pensions.

The policy of the government towards workers in the public sector has led to a big rise in the number of working days lost through industrial action. A total of 788,000 days were lost in 2014, up 75 per cent on the previous year, according to figures from the Office for national Statistics. The figure is higher than the average for both the 2000s and 1990s and is the third highest for the past 10 years (INDEPENDENT 16th July 2015).

However, the strikes which have taken place in the public sector have seldom been successful when pitted against the intransigence of the employers in an economic environment unconducive to strike action. Public sector services being impeded by strike action can make trade unions unpopular with the public. How trade unions will resist or manage the new anti-trade union legislation remains to be seen. Nevertheless strikes are not a barometer of the class struggle which takes place on a daily basis over the intensity and extent of class exploitation irrespective of whether workers are members of trade unions or not.

The right for trade unionists to withhold their labour became an essential means of resistance to employers and the employers' state. Without it workers would have been crushed beyond hope of recovery and would have become, as Marx argued in his pamphlet, *VALUE, PRICE AND PROFIT*, quite incapable of "*initiating any large movement*". Socialists have always seen the usefulness of trade unions in the class struggle as means of getting higher wages and better working conditions for their members. However the Socialist Party will only give support to trade unions when they take action in the interest of the working class as a whole.

We have argued for decades that trade unions should not have leaders and that decisions should be democratic with a majority voting for a strike and a majority voting for a strike to be called off. And we have stressed time and time again that trade unions should not bankroll the anti-working class Labour Party or the capitalist left like the SWP and the reformist '*socialist*' party.

Nevertheless we note the anti-trade union spitefulness of the Tory legislation. If a trade union passed all the hoops presented to them by the proposed legislation, would the Tory Party and their friends in the media applaud the democratic action of the trade union membership in going on strike? Would they hell! Any doubts on this score were removed recently when a trade union ballot achieved a 98% vote of support for strike action, as NHS hospital doctors emphatically refused to be bullied into accepting a new government-imposed contract.

Marx was right to highlight the difficulty trade unions had in the class struggle.

Not only is the playing field tilted in favour of the capitalist class but they own the field, write the rules and pay the referee to enforce them.

To get the capitalist class off the back of the working class requires a principled socialist response from workers. And for a very good reason. Politically, the class struggle must be fought over the ownership of the means of production and distribution. At the moment raw resources, factories, transport, communication and distribution points are all monopolised by the capitalist class solely for the purpose of making profit, not to meet human need.

Trade union action is solely defensive and cannot be used for political purposes by the fragmented nature of their organisation and composition. A socialist majority united within a socialist party with only socialism as its object has first to secure the machinery of government, including the armed forces to ensure a smooth transformation from production for profit to production directly for social use. To fundamentally change the ownership of the means of production in a revolutionary way, what means of production and distribution are democratically used for and for whom, must be through the political action of a principled socialist party not trade unions.

THE SECRET MILLIONAIRE

The Secret Millionaire is a reality television show run by Channel 4, in which millionaires go in disguise into impoverished communities and agree to give away tens of thousands of pounds to the “deserving poor”. Two of the secrets the programme never identifies are how the millionaire in question amassed his or her fortune and why there are recipients to their charitable largesse. The millionaire’s wealth actually comes from the class he goes out to visit; the working class. Workers produce more social wealth than they receive as wages and salaries. Marx called this “surplus value” and is the source of the unearned income passing to the capitalist class in the form of rent, interest and profit.

And the poor of the inner cities are poor, not because of their own personal failing, but because, as a class, workers do not own the means of production and distribution. That is the source of their poverty. The producers of Channel 4 can never let on that that the class privilege of their millionaires derives from class exploitation and the private ownership of the means of production. The secret millionaire is not reality TV but fantasy TV. The programme is designed to put a class of parasites in a good light. The passive recipients of their charity are how the TV producers would like to think of our class; apolitical, stupid and feckless. But an understanding the reality of their class position and a conscious awareness that it can be changed politically would lead workers to abolish both the social conditions which keep them in poverty and to establish a social system based on meeting human need rather than profit for the few.

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Why Do We Need Socialism?

Why do we need socialism? The reaction of many workers to this question will be to dismiss it as being of no concern of theirs. They are concerned, they say, with the company that employs them, with their chance of keeping their jobs or getting more pay.

They are mistaken. What happens to a particular company depends upon its ability to sell its products at a profit, which in turn depends on what happens in the economy as a whole – that is capitalism. Workers partially recognise that they have common interests with other workers by organising in trade unions. Socialists urge them in their own class interest, to take the further step of replacing capitalism with socialism.

Capitalism, the social system we live under today, is briefly described in our DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:

Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living, (i.e. land, factories, railways,

etc.,) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced

Our OBJECT deals with socialism as we define it:

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Unfortunately, and through no fault of their own, the terms “*capitalism*” and “*socialism*” have both become to be widely used to mean something quite different from what they mean to socialists.

The Labour and Tory parties have for many years, restricted the term capitalism to cover only part of the capitalist system, excluding from the definition the nationalised or state capitalist industries. In keeping with this unjustified limitation, both parties have chosen to call the state capitalist industries “*socialism*”.

This was not always so, for some of the leaders and founders of the Labour Party once took a different view. Sidney Webb, later to become a Minister in Labour governments, signed THE MANIFESTO OF ENGLISH SOCIALISTS (1893) which contained this declaration:

On this point all socialists agree. Our aim, one and all, is to obtain for the whole community complete ownership and control of the means of transport, the means of manufacture, the mines and the land. Thus we look to put an end for ever to the wages system, to sweep away all distinctions of class, and eventually to establish National and International Communism on a sound basis

In 1907, Kier Hardie the “*father of the Labour Party*”, and its first champion, justified nationalisation, not as an end for itself, but on the grounds that: “*it will prepare the way for free communism...in which the rule of life will be ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs’*”. In saying this, he was, as he said, claiming the Labour Party to be “*Marxist*”

”. The Tory Party has been equally inconsistent. Nowadays they say that nationalisation is socialism. They did not say that in 1844, when they passed the first Act giving the government power to nationalise the railways, or when Tory governments nationalised the postal, telegraph and telephone services, or when they set up the Central Electricity Board and the BBC. Their claim, when they did these things, was that those were measures undertaken in the interests of capitalism.

The Tories have a special problem with their idolised leader, Winston Churchill, for during the greater part of his political life, he was a supporter of nationalisation and, in their misuse of language, there must have been a “*socialist*”. Churchill was a Minister in the Liberal government, before 1914, which introduced pensions and other “*welfare*” benefits for workers, copying the German system introduced by Bismarck, an opponent of socialism. In 1943, when he was prime minister, he declared:

There is a broadening field for state ownership and enterprise, especially in relation to monopolies

Karl Marx spent a large part of his life studying the historical developments which produced the social system we now know as capitalism. He identified what distinguishes it from earlier social systems, and described how capitalism came into being with the forcible removal of the peasants from the land, turning them into a propertyless class – wage earners producing profits for the owners of capital.

In his analysis, Marx set out the conditions necessary for the rise of the capitalist system of society: - a peasantry forced off the land and compelled therefore to seek employment; an owning class possessing land and money; the prevailing arrangement being the production of “*commodities*” (the products of industry not directly produced for use but for sale on the market), and the dispossessed class being wage workers as opposed to peasants or serfs.

Marx showed that the essential distinctive characteristic of capitalism is **not** the exploitation of one class by another, or riches and poverty, (both existed when there was slavery and in the feudal system). The hallmark of capitalism is

commodity production and exchange for profit as the prevailing system, where the social wealth is produced by a class of wage earners. So the opening paragraph of Marx's CAPITAL (vol. 1) begins with the words:

The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as "an immense accumulation of commodities"

In line with this, Marx's aim of replacing capitalism with socialism involved, not only the dispossession of the owning class but the ending of production for sale. It was put by Marx and Engels in THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO as "*the abolition of buying and selling*". Engels said: "*With the seizure of the means of production by society, production of commodities is done away with*". Marx also showed, historically, in all forms of society, the way in which the products of industry are divided among the different classes is determined by the existing mode of production itself.

In socialist society, with production directly and solely for use and the consequent disappearance of the money system, the wages system and incomes from the ownership of property, all members of society will have free access to what is produced. It follows that socialism will be democratic or it would not be Socialism: there is no way a socialist society could function if it were not democratic.

Of course socialism as we define it does not exist anywhere in the world today. Such "*socialist*" countries as China and Cuba are merely examples of state capitalist countries which use the "*socialist*" tag purely on the grounds of the dictatorship of the Communist Party leadership and nationalised industries. The recent financial and property crisis in China has not seen Chinese bankers and economists reaching for CAPITAL but going to bourgeois economic text books and theories. The recently elected government in France will certainly not establish socialism although the governing party goes under that name. The same applies to the "*socialism*" of Jeremy Corbyn if he becomes Labour Leader and wins the next election. He shares with the 1844 Tory government under Sir Robert Peel, the policy of nationalising the railways. These claims to be socialist are totally without foundation.

In all the countries of the world there is a wage earning class which is divorced from the means of production, getting its living by being employees of the companies and government which own and control society's means of production and distribution. In all the countries of the world there are inequalities of wealth and income, along with commodity production and exchange for profit

Everywhere the profits of the capitalist system of production derive entirely from the unpaid labour of the working class. Each day our class works for the employers we get paid only a part of what we produce: their profits can only come from our unpaid labour. Each day we work for them we make them richer. But our wages, commissions and salaries are carefully calculated in relation to just the basic cost of living, plus a bit more for those with skills. For the most part we are lucky if we can get the employers to pay enough to cover our basic needs.

That is the reason we argue for socialism: the capitalist system is not in the interests of us, the working class – 99% of the population. The only way this system can work is through the exploitation of workers imprisoned within the wages system. No amount of reforms to capitalism can change this fact.

In seeking to abolish capitalism and replace it with socialism, socialists appeal to the working class of the world. It is in the common interest of the working class, no matter where they live, to bring about socialist revolutionary change, democratically, through a political movement whose sole and only aim is socialism; the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

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End Piece: Marx and Capitalism

Professor John Kay, the Oxford economist, stated a few years back in a series of articles "*capitalism in crisis*", run by the FINANCIALTIMES, that Marx did not use the word "*capitalism*" in the first volume of CAPITAL (*Our*

system is no longer capitalism in its original form, 10th January 2012). The Professor thought that this omission was profoundly important but he did not say why. Professor Kay went on to remark that Marx instead used the expression “*mode of production*”. And indeed Marx said so right at the beginning of the first volume of CAPITAL. Marx wrote:

The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an “immense collection of commodities... (CAPITAL VOL 1 p. 125 Penguin 1990)

Kay then claimed that the capitalist mode of production Marx had spent a life-time studying had “*disappeared*” by the end of the 19th century. And Kay concluded:

Sloppy language leads to sloppy thinking. By continuing to use the 19th-century term capitalism for an economic system that has evolved into something altogether different, we are liable to misunderstand the sources of strength of the market economy and the role capital plays within it.

And what had 19th century capitalism “*evolved into*”? What role did “*capital*” now play? According to Professor Kay during the 20th century most large scale companies were in the process of being owned by banks, pension funds and insurance companies on the one hand and run by professional managers on the other. For Professor Kay this change was a neat way to dispose of Marx. If Marx’s CAPITAL described a form of capitalism which no longer existed then we have no need to read his works or pay him any attention.

Of course, Professor Kay is being disingenuous. He does not apply his reasoning to Adam Smith and the WEALTH OF NATIONS Which just happens to be the bible of the free marketers like Kay himself. Smith’s flawed example of the pin factory, for example, is uncritically acclaimed while his free trade and free market doctrines are unquestionably applied with religious fervour to the 21st century and all its economic woes. And ignored by modern day defenders of capitalism is Smith’s primitive theory of value.

Professor Kay’s argument is totally bogus and only demonstrates the poverty of economic teaching found in today’s universities. It is Kay who uses sloppy language and consequently sloppy thinking in dismissing as out-of-date the contradictions and their consequences Marx investigated taking place in a market economy. We feel sorry for his students. Who will teach the teacher?

Capitalism has not evolved into another system. The social forces of production are still being constrained by class relations of production. The problems Marx investigated in the 19th century are exactly the same problems facing the working class in the 21st century; production taking place for profit instead of meeting human need, economic crises and periodic high levels of unemployment, class exploitation, social alienation and poverty.

What of industrial production; who benefits? Capitalists may have left the factories but the managers who have replaced them still have to ensure the company makes profits for shareholders and profits still derive from the exploitation of the working class just as they did in Marx’s day. Increased share dividend to the investors is the name of the game. And you will not last long as a manager if you do not deliver yearly profits.

What then of the capitalist mode of production? Does Marx’s critique of capitalism adequately capture the economic system in which we live?

Marx and the Capitalist Mode of Production

Marx described capitalism as “*a mode of production*” based upon commodity production and exchange for profit. The mode of production is defined by Marx as the way in which a social system is organized to produce goods and services.

The mode of production consists of two major and interrelated factors: the social forces of production and the social relations of production.

The social forces of production include land, raw materials, and energy as well as human skill and co-operative and

social labour to run the machinery, tools, factories, transport and communication system and distribution facilities.

The relations of production refer to those who own the machinery of production and distribution and those who do not.

Under capitalism the relations of production are class relations where a capitalist class and its state, including the armed forces, face a working class struggling to resist the intensity and extent of exploitation. In the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO Marx pointed out that the class struggle is a political struggle over the ownership of the means of production and distribution.

And under capitalism workers do not own the means of production, they are forced onto the labour market to buy and sell their labour power (their mental and physical energies) to employers. And during their time at work, workers are exploited producing what Marx called “*surplus value*” (their unpaid labour, what they produce over and above what they earn by way of wages and salaries) the origin of the unearned income of rent, interest and profit. Workers are therefore nothing more than wage slaves imprisoned within the wages system.

A Rose by another Name

Marx’s explanation of class exploitation faced by the working class is as true today as it was in the 19th century. Capitalism has not changed into something else. Marx did in fact go on to use the word “*capitalism*” in the second volume of CAPITAL published and edited after his death by Friedrich Engels as one of our readers of SOCIALIST STUDIES recently pointed out. This is what Marx wrote when discussing replacement costs:

These replacement costs are significant in nations where there is a developed capitalism. (Capital, volume two, pelican 1978, p.213)

And on the following page he continues:

But all labour that adds value can also add surplus-value and will always add surplus-value on the basis of capitalism

Some might say isn’t it all a little academic? Possibly? Just a rose by another name. Yet the Professor Kays’ of the world have an ulterior motive. Economists cannot answer Marx. All they can do is use subterfuge and artifice to avoid confronting his ideas. After all that is what they are paid to do. Sycophants and hired gunslingers one and all. In CAPITAL they see their own ugly image reflected back at them:

...the vulgar economists confine themselves to systematizing in a pedantic way, and proclaiming for everlasting truths, the banal and complacent notions held by the bourgeoisie agents of production about their own world, which is to them the best possible one (Capital Vol 1, Ch. 1 note 34 p 175).

Whether “*capitalist mode of production*” or “*capitalism*” is used to describe the exploitive social system we currently live under, the Socialist Party of Great Britain’s position on the profit system is quite clear:

Capitalism is a system of society based on the class ownership of the means of production and distribution in which wealth is produced by propertyless wage workers, to be sold on the market with a view to profit. Capitalism, therefore, is a class society with a privileged few living off the labour of the exploited many (Questions of the Day, Socialist Party of Great Britain, “What is Capitalism/” p. 5).

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Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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